

Communication Skills Training
Conflict Resolution:
Handling Work Place Conflicts

Indian Health Service
Division of Diabetes
Treatment and Prevention

Learning Objectives

- Identify the four levels of conflict communication
- Apply skills that enhance conflict communication
- Describe the two goals of conflict resolution
- Describe one change you can make to your practice related to conflict prevention and resolution

Conflict Resolution

- Conflicts happen often in work settings
- Expressed struggle over scarce resources
- People have to work together
- Both parties have a role

General Conflict Resolution Practices

First reduce fear

- anger comes from fear
- Build on fear of things not working out

What to do:

- Person with more power should try to reduce fear
- Use "we" statements
- Allow time to express concerns
- Acknowledge feelings

General Conflict Resolution Practices

Break the issue into parts

- Make it smaller, instead of one giant issue

What to do:

- Ask for clarification to describe the concerns better
- Try to prioritize the concerns
- Work on solutions together

General Conflict Resolution Practices

Don't pull back, keep yourself in the picture

What to do:

- Think of a talking circle
- Everybody's ideas are important
- Everybody has something to contribute to the solution

General Conflict Resolution Practices

It's not about the person, it's about the problem

What to do:

- Focus on the problem
- Don't blame the person

4 Levels of Conflict: TRFC

- Topic: What do we want?
- Relationship: Who are we to each other?
- Face-saving: Preserving dignity.
- Communication Strategy: What approach works?

Topic

What do we want?

- What is the conflict about?
 - Really crystallize the topic, don't be vague
- What should be done?
 - Be more specific, instead of vague
- How do you tackle the problem of scarce resources?
 - Problem solve, brain storming

Relationship

Who are we to each other?

- Power in relationships must be negotiated
 - Recognize power differential
- Preserve the relationship for future work
 - Recognize and respect power differential
 - Give opportunity to express needs
- Pay attention to strong emotions
 - Acknowledge and respect feelings

Face-saving: Preserving Dignity

Avoid Sense of Failure

- Assume good intentions
- Flexibility works
- Respect opinions and feelings
- Keep things positive-don't bring each other down

What approach works best?

- Brainstorm possibilities:
 - Group decision-making, delegation, top-down decision-making, gather more information
- Include everyone who is affected
- Allow time for discussion
- Separate discussion from decision-making

Troubleshooting

- *If you are stuck at one level of conflict, go to another level*
 - Switch from topic to relationship concerns
 - Switch from communication strategy to face-saving
- *Be sure to cover all four levels*

Goals of Conflict Resolution

- *Solve the problem*
- *Preserve the relationship*
